

free and fair 1990 elections in which the National League for Democracy won a vast majority of both the popular vote and the parliamentary seats, the ruling junta has continued to refuse to negotiate with pro-democracy forces and ethnic groups for a genuine political settlement to allow a return to the rule of law and respect for basic human rights. Burma has taken limited but insufficient steps to counter narcotics production and trafficking.

The net effect of U.S. and international measures to pressure the SPDC to end its repression and move toward democratic government has been a further decline in investor confidence in Burma and deeper stagnation of the Burmese economy. Observers agree that the Burmese economy appears to be further weakening and that the government has a serious shortage of foreign exchange reserves with which to pay for imports. While Burma's economic crisis is largely a result of the SPDC's own heavy-handed mismanagement, the SPDC is unlikely to find a way out of the crisis unless political developments permit an easing of international pressure. I shall continue to exercise the powers at my disposal to deal with these problems and will report periodically to the Congress on significant developments.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate.

Remarks to the Welfare to Work Partnership Board

May 27, 1998

Thank you very much. Secretary Herman, Secretary Shalala, Administrator Alvarez, Director Lachance, thank you. Let me begin by thanking all of you for coming. I thank especially three Members of the House of Representatives who are here: Congressmen Payne, Gordon, and Davis, who are up here on the front row. I can't thank Eli Segal enough for the wonderful work he has done. He has now given birth to two of the most important initiatives of this administration: First, our national service corps project,

AmeriCorps, which now has about 100,000 alumni to its credit who have earned money for college by serving in their communities; and now the Welfare to Work Partnership.

I want to thank Gerry Greenwald for being willing to take on the leadership of this operation when no one could have known that it would turn out as well as it has. I thank the members of the board of directors and the other business supporters who are here. I thank the former welfare recipients and others who have supported them who are here.

I want to say a word about Rhonda, but first I want to tell you that Tonya Oden, who is over here sitting to my left, spoke on a program like this at the Cessna Corporation in Wichita, Kansas. And she did a great job, and all of her folks were cheering for her. And I was listening to Rhonda, thinking, the best part of this program is over. After she finished, I thought, the best part of this program is over. [*Laughter*]

When you hear someone like Rhonda talk, you look at the people who are here and see these fine children, this is really a case where a picture is worth a million words. We will see a lot more of Rhonda pretty soon because the Welfare to Work Partnership is airing some new national public service announcements with her as the spokesperson. And I want to thank Time Warner for helping us to put them on the air and say that I am quite confident that she will inspire a lot of other people to follow her lead.

The Welfare to Work Partnership was based on the simple premise that now that we have passed the welfare reform law which required all able-bodied people who could work to work, we had a moral obligation as a society to provide a job to all those people who were about to lose their guaranteed benefits for idleness. It began with an understanding that we had to change the welfare system. And the conversation Rhonda related between herself and her daughter says more than I could ever say.

I began working on this problem almost 20 years ago now. And I used to—when I was a Governor, I used to gather up former welfare recipients and put them on panels and make Governors listen to people talk about the difference in their lives as parents,

as citizens, the difference in their self-image when they were productive members of society.

After I became President, we worked with 43 different States to get them out from under Federal rule so they could start programs that would help move more people from welfare to work, and then in 1996 I signed a historic bipartisan welfare reform law that literally ended the old welfare system as we knew it. It said that we would continue to guarantee health care and nutrition to low-income families and children, but that after a certain amount of time, people who could go to work, had to go to work. It also said that we had to provide more in the way of child care and other supports for people who did move from welfare to work.

But that left a big gap. How were all these people going to find jobs? Would the existing system do it? That's what led to the creation of the Welfare to Work Partnership a year ago. And again let me say, I am profoundly indebted to the business people who are here and those who they represent.

We announced a year ago 100 companies had joined the partnership. We set a goal of reaching 1,000 companies within a year. We underestimated by a factor of 5; there are now more than 5,000 companies in this partnership. And what Eli and Gerry didn't say that I want to make clear is, they didn't just put their name on the dotted line. All sorts of businesses, large and small and middle size, have together in the last year hired 135,000 welfare recipients who are now employees thanks to what they have done. That's an astonishing record in only a year, and I thank them for it.

Let me point out to the skeptics, 70 percent—70 percent—of that 135,000 jobs are full-time jobs with full health benefits. *[Applause]* Yeah, that's really worth clapping for.

Now, as Gerry pointed out and as many of the members of the board of directors told me earlier, right before we came over here, this is not just good for America and not just good for these families; it's also turned out to be good for the businesses involved, many of whom find that these new workers stay on the job longer, with less turnover, and later work to motivate their coworkers.

We've tried to do our part. Aida Alvarez and the Small Business Administration are trying to connect new workers to small businesses to make sure that our most vibrant, growing sector of the society, in terms of employees, takes on a fair share of people from welfare to work. We've tried to mobilize religious and civic and nonprofit groups under the Vice President's leadership to provide mentoring and support and help people get into and stay in jobs. The Federal Government has hired 4,800 people from welfare to work in the last year; our goal is 10,000 by the year 2000, and we will make that. Seven work in the Executive Office of the President, and I'm particularly proud of them. The balanced budget agreement I signed into law last summer provides \$3 billion to help our communities move long-term, harder-to-place welfare recipients into jobs.

Now, these combined efforts have produced, along with the rising economy, rather stunning results. When I took office, there were more than 14 million people on welfare, about 5 and a half percent of the Nation's population. It actually peaked in February of '94; it's the highest percentage we'd ever had. Today, there are fewer than 9 million people on welfare, 3.3 percent of the population, the lowest percentage of the population on welfare since 1969.

Now, this is a very hard-won victory for everybody who was a part of it. But the most important part of it are the families. I think when we look at Rhonda, when we look at Tonya, when we look at Rhonda's kids there, when we look at all of the other people who have moved from welfare to work who are here, we have to ask ourselves, what else do we have to do? Because I can promise you that there still are going to be people who can be moved from welfare to work who aren't there yet.

First, we have to find more private sector jobs. I would like to ask the Welfare to Work Partnership in 1998 to double the number of people they hire and to double the number of companies that are participating. Now, that sounds outrageous, but I just asked for 1,000 companies and you produced 5,000, so—*[laughter]*—mathematically I'm asking

for less. [Laughter] I got good grades in math; I know about that. [Laughter]

And again, I hope that the people who will watch the public service announcements that Rhonda will do will understand this is an enormous opportunity. One of the things that our economists sit around and worry about here in Washington all the time is, they say, "Well, we've got 4.3 unemployment; we've averaged way over 3 percent growth the last couple of years; how can we keep growing this economy without having inflation?" The answer is, go into the neighborhoods where there are still a lot of poor people who are unemployed and on public assistance and give them a chance to be a part of the American free enterprise system. That's an inflation-free way to expand the American economy. So we have to do this.

The second thing we have to do is to help more welfare recipients succeed in the workplace. The employers today told me that one of the hardest things for people moving from welfare to work is still providing transportation, providing child care, making sure for the smaller businesses that may not be able to afford all the training and education that there's support there. We have to do more.

Let me say that the highway bill, which just passed the Congress, I'm proud to say, has a substantial amount of money in it to help defray the transportation costs of people moving from welfare to work.

The tobacco bill, which has not yet passed, but which I hope and pray will pass, has in it or will have in it a provision, if the agreement we've made with the Governors prevails, which will lead to a substantial investment in helping to defray the child care costs. The Labor Department has awarded grants to support 49 innovative efforts around the country that provide training and education that help people move from entry-level jobs to higher-paying positions, that help fathers go to work so they can take more responsibility for their children. So we have to do more, and we're going to.

Now, finally, I think we've got an obligation to continue to fix—we've already made a good start—but to continue to fix parts of the welfare reform bill that didn't have anything to do with welfare reform. Last year Congress acted—and I appreciate it—to re-

store important disability and health benefits to legal immigrants, people who come here legally and have a right to work and have, in my view, a right to supports.

Two weeks ago the Senate voted overwhelmingly to restore food stamps to elderly, disabled, and very young legal immigrants. And I hope the House will follow their lead. That's the right thing to do. At this moment of prosperity when we're trying to support each other, move more people into the work place, when a lot of immigrants are filling needed work positions and we have low unemployment, we owe it to ourselves to do the right thing here.

Now again, let me say that the best part of this program was before I ever got up here. And I want you to remember when you walk out of here what Rhonda looked like when she got up here and what her kids looked like when they stood up, being proud of their mother, and how Gerry's happier doing this than he would have been if he'd won that \$100 million lottery. [Laughter] He may not know that, but he is. [Laughter] And I want us to go out and double our results by next year.

We've got to prove that we did the right thing in welfare reform for all the American people that are willing to do the right thing by themselves, their children, and our country. And if we ever needed evidence that it is right, we've got it here today in full.

Thank you all, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:17 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Office of Personnel Management Director Janice R. Lachance; Representative Danny K. Davis; Eli Segal, president and chief executive officer, and United Airlines executive Gerald Greenwald, chairman, Welfare to Work Partnership; former welfare recipients Rhonda Costa and Tonya Oden; and Ms. Costa's daughters, Lakiyah and Lashana.

Remarks at the Friends of Art and Preservation in Embassies Dinner May 27, 1998

Thank you, Ann; thank you, Jo Carole Lauder. Thank you very much, Robin Duke, for your remarkable work, and your partner John Whitehead out there. I thank our good